IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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Serial No. : 10/747,678   Examiner : Shaq Taha
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Title   : IDENTIFYING AND USING IDENTITIES DEEMED TO BE KNOWN TO A
              USER

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1.   (Previously Presented) A method of controlling aspects of communications between a
user and senders:

        maintaining, on one or more computers, a list of identities associated with a user;

        receiving, at the one or more computers, one or more e-mails from an entity and directed
to the user;

        detecting, at the one or more computers, one or more actions performed by the user on
the received one or more e-mails from the entity, the actions supporting an inference that the
entity is associated with the user and including at least one of moving at least one of the received
e-mails from a first folder to a second folder or leaving at least one of the received e-mails open
for a predetermined period of time;

        determining, at the one or more computers, that the entity is associated with the user
based, at least in part, on the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more
e-mails that support an inference that the entity is associated with the user, wherein determining
that the entity is associated with the user includes:

                associating, at the one or more computers, a score with each of the detected
actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails from the entity, the score
indicating a strength of the action in supporting an inference that the entity is associated with the
user;

                aggregating, at the one or more computers, the associated scores of detected
actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails from the entity;

                comparing, at the one or more computers, the aggregated score with a threshold
score; and

determining, at the one or more computers, that the entity is associated with the user when the aggregated score exceeds the threshold score;

adding, at the one or more computers, the entity to the maintained list when the entity is determined to be associated with the user based, at least in part, on the detected actions performed on the received one or more e-mails that support an inference that the entity is associated with the user;

receiving, at the one or more computers, one or more e-mails directed to the user;

identifying, at the one or more computers, senders of the received e-mails;

comparing, at the one or more computers, the identified senders to the maintained list of identities associated with the user to determine which of the senders are included in the maintained list;

controlling, using the one or more computers, aspects of communications between the user and the senders based on which of the senders are included in the maintained list.

2.   (Canceled).

3.   (Canceled).

4.   (Cancelled)

5.   (Cancelled)

6.   (Cancelled)

7.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails that supports an inference that the entity is associated with the user include replying to, forwarding, saving, or printing an e-mail received from the entity.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails that support an inference that the entity is associated with the user include moving an e-mail from a first folder to a second folder.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein the first folder is an inbox folder and the second folder is a folder other than a delete folder or a spam folder.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails that supports an inference that the entity is associated with the user include leaving an e-mail from the entity open for a predetermined period of time.

11.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

        determining that a second entity is associated with the user based, at least in part, on detecting a communication between the user and the second entity;

        adding the second entity to the maintained list when the second entity is determined to be associated with the user.

12.   (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the communication is an instant messaging communication.

13.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising adding a second entity to the maintained list when the second entity is determined to be associated with the user based, at least in part, on:

        accessing a contact list of the user to determine a first contact on the user's contact list; and

        accessing a contact list of the first contact to determine a second contact on the first contact's contact list.

14.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising determining that a second entity is not associated with the user based, at least in part, on detecting user actions that negate an inference that the second entity is associated with the user.

15.   (Cancelled)

16.   (Cancelled)

17.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14 wherein the detected actions comprise moving a communication from the entity to either of a spam folder or a delete folder.

18.   (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

    enabling the user to expressly designate a person as associated with the user; and

    adding the designated person to the list.

19.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the identities associated with the user are identities known to the user.

20.   (Previously Presented) A computer-usable medium having a computer program embodied thereon for displaying e-mail, the computer program comprising instructions for causing a computer to perform the following operations:

    maintain a list of identities associated with a user;

    receive one or more emails from an entity and directed to the user;

    detect one or more actions performed by the user on the received one or more emails from the entity, the actions supporting an inference that the entity is associated with the user and including at least one of moving at least one of the received e-mails from a first folder to a second folder or leaving at least one of the received e-mails open for a predetermined period of time;

determine that an entity is associated with the user based, at least in part, on detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more emails, wherein determining that the entity is associated with the user includes:

associating a score with each of the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails from the entity, the score indicating a strength of the action in supporting an inference that the entity is associated with the user;

aggregating the associated scores of detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails from the entity;

comparing the aggregated score with a threshold score; and

determining that the entity is associated with the user when the aggregated score exceeds the threshold score;

add the person to the maintained list when the entity is determined to be associated with the user based, at least in part, on the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more emails that support an inference that the entity is associated with the user;

receive one or more e-mails directed to the user;

identify senders of the received e-mail;

compare the identified senders to the maintained list of people associated with the user to determine which of the senders are included on the list; and

control aspects of communications between the user and the identified senders based on the determination of which identified senders are included on the list..

21.   (Canceled).

22.   (Canceled).

23.   (Canceled).

24.   (Cancelled)

25.   (Cancelled)

26.   (Previously Presented) The medium of claim 20 wherein the detected actions performed by the user supporting an inference that the entity is associated with the user include replying to, forwarding, saving, or printing an e-mail received from the entity.

27.   (Previously Presented) The medium of claim 20 wherein the detected actions performed by the user supporting an inference that the entity is associated with the user include moving an e-mail from a first folder to a second folder.

28.   (Original) The medium of claim 27 wherein the first folder is an inbox folder and the second folder is a folder other than a delete folder or a spam folder.

29.   (Previously Presented) The medium of claim 20 wherein the detected-actions performed by the user supporting an inference that the entity is associated with the user include leaving an e-mail from the entity open for a predetermined period of time.

30.   (Previously Presented) The medium of claim 20 wherein the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to:

        determine that a second entity is associated with the user based, at least in part, on detecting a communication between the user and the second entity;

        add the second entity to the maintained list when the second entity is determined to be associated with the user.

31.   (Original) The medium of claim 30 wherein the communication is an instant messaging communication.

32.   (Previously Presented) The medium of claim 20 further comprises instructions for causing a computer to:

        access a contact list of the user to determine a first contact on the user's contact list; and

        access a contact list of the first contact to determine a second contact on the first contact's contact list.

33. (Previously Presented) The medium of claim 20 wherein the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to determine that a second entity is not associated with the user based, at least in part, on detecting user actions that negate an inference that a person is associated with the user.

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Cancelled)

36. (Previously Presented) The medium of claim 33 wherein the detected actions performed by the user comprise moving a communication from the person to either of a spam folder or a delete folder.

37. (Original) The medium of claim 20 wherein the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to:

       enable the user to expressly designate a person as associated with the user; and

       add the designated person to the list.

38. (Previously Presented) The medium of claim 20 wherein the identities associated with the user are identities known to the user.

39. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for controlling aspects of communications between a user and senders:

       means for maintaining a list of identities associated with a user;

       means for receiving one or more emails from an entity and directed to the user;

       means for detecting one or more actions performed by the user on the received one or more emails from the entity, the user actions supporting an inference that the entity is associated with the user and including at least one of moving at least one of the received e-mails from a first folder to a second folder or leaving at least one of the received e-mails open for a predetermined period of time;

means for determining that the entity is associated with the user based, at least in part, on detected user actions performed on the received one or more emails that support an inference that the entity is associated with the user, wherein the means for determining that the entity is associated with the user includes:

means for associating a score with each of the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails from the entity, the score indicating a strength of the action in supporting an inference that the entity is associated with the user;

means for aggregating the associated scores of detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails from the entity;

means for comparing the aggregated score with a threshold score; and

means for determining that the entity is associated with the user when the aggregated score exceeds the threshold score;

means for adding the entity to the maintained list when the entity is determined to be associated with the use based, at least in part, on detected actions performed on the received one or more emails that support an inference that the entity is associated with the user;

means for receiving one or more e-mails directed to the user;

means for identifying senders of the received e-mail;

means for comparing the identified senders to the maintained list of people associated with the user to determine which of the senders are included on the list; and

means for controlling aspects of communications between the user and each identified sender based on the determination whether that identified sender is included in the maintained list.

40.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein detecting one or more actions performed by the user on the one or more emails from the entity includes detecting a combination of user actions performed on the one or more emails from the entity.

41   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

detecting one or more actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails from the entity, the user actions supporting an inference that the entity is not associated with the user;

wherein determining that the entity is associated with the user includes determining that the entity is associated with the user based at least in part, on the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails that supports an inference that the entity is not associated with the user; and the detected actions performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails that support an inference that the entity is associated with the user.

42.   (Cancelled)

43.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim **1** further comprising:

associating a negative score to an action performed by the user on the received one or more e-mails from the entity, the action supporting an inference that the entity is not associated with the user.

44.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein controlling aspects of communications between the user and senders based on which of the senders are included in the maintained list includes:

displaying a list of the e-mails directed to the user; and

sorting the displayed list of e-mails based on which of the senders are included in the maintained list.

45.   (Previously Presented) The computer-usable medium of claim 20 wherein, to control aspects of communications between the user and senders based on which of the senders are included in the maintained list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing the computer to:

display a list of the e-mails directed to the user; and

sort the displayed list of e-mails based on which of the senders are included in the maintained list.

46.   (New) The method of claim 44 wherein sorting the display based on which of the senders are included in the list comprises sorting the display such that e-mails from senders on the list are grouped in one position of the display.

47.   (New) The method of claim 44 wherein sorting the display based on which of the senders are included in the list comprises sorting the display such that e-mails from senders on the list are displayed and e-mails from senders not on the list are not displayed.

48.   (New) The medium of claim 45 wherein, to sort the display based on which of the senders are included in the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to sort display such that e-mails from senders on the list are grouped in one position of the display.

49.   (New) The medium of claim 45 wherein, to sort the display based on which of the senders are included in the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to sort the display such that e-mails from senders on the list are displayed and e-mails from identities not on the list are not displayed.

50.   (New) The medium of claim 45 wherein, to sort the display based on which of the senders are included in the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to sort the display such that e-mails from senders on the list are not displayed and e-mails from identities on the list are not displayed.